

CLAIMS

1. A method for allowing the creation of a plurality of personalized messages

comprising:

creating a personalized message template comprising a plurality of slots in sequence, wherein at least one of said slots can include one of a plurality of different segments, with all segments for a particular slot being a same length;

providing a plurality of data streams to a receiving unit, each data stream delivering a different one of said plurality of segments for said at least one slots, wherein said segments are synchronized to begin and end at substantially the same time;

providing content selection information regarding content of said plurality of data streams to said receiving unit, said information including switch times for said plurality of synchronized segments, to allow said receiving unit to select among said plurality of data streams for one of said segments for said particular slot, to assemble a personalized message.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving unit selects among said plurality of data streams in real time.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said personalized message is viewed by a viewer as it is assembled.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving unit selects among said plurality of data streams based on said content selection information and information about a viewer who will view said personalized message.

5. The method of claim 4 further including providing a data stream with a default personalized message to allow said receiving unit to display said default personalized message without selecting between said plurality of data streams.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of data streams are MPEG encoded data streams.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of data streams are multiplexed into a transport stream.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said segments are incomplete parts of a personalized message.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving unit is a set top box.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said set top box can receive both analog data streams and digital data streams, and wherein said set top box momentarily switches from an analog data stream to a digital data stream to play out a personalized message.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said set top box switches from an analog data stream to a digital data stream triggered by VBI data.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein said set top box momentarily switches from a first digital data stream to a second digital data stream to play out a personalized message.

13. The method of claim 9 wherein said set top box receives a plurality of television channels over said data streams, and said channels include programs including a synchronized commercial break; and

during said synchronized commercial break; said data streams deliver segments to create a personalized message for display irrespective of which channel said set top box had selected.

14. The method of claim 1 further including transition segments, which are inserted into said personalized message between said segments.

15. The method of claim 1 further including a plurality of templates for creating said personalized messages, wherein said templates include video sequence templates and audio sequence templates.

5 16. A system for distributing a plurality of multimedia personalized messages to a plurality of end users, said system comprising:

a personalized message template comprising a plurality of slots in sequence;

a plurality of media segments for said slots, wherein at least one of said slots can include one of a plurality of different media segments, with all media segments for a particular slot being
10 a same length;

a plurality of data streams transmitting said media segments, wherein said plurality of data streams transmit all media segments for one of said slots in at a same time, and wherein one of said data streams transmits content selection information regarding content of said plurality of data streams said information including switch times for allowing a receiving unit to switch
15 among said plurality of data streams to select a particular media segment at a particular time, to assemble said personalized message.

17. The system of Claim 16, wherein said receiving unit switches between analog data streams and digital data streams to assemble said personalized message.

18. The system of Claim 16 wherein said receiving unit switches between a first digital data stream to at least one second digital data stream to assemble said personalized message.

19. A system for distributing a plurality of multimedia personalized messages to a plurality of
25 end viewers, said system comprising:

a means for creating a personalized message template with plurality of slots;

a means for creating a plurality of media segments, said media segments for use in said slots;

a transmission means for transmitting said media segments, wherein said media segments
30 for a particular slot in said personalized message are transmitted at a same time;

a means for providing content information to allow a receiving unit to select one of said media segments at a particular time, to assemble said personalized message.

20. A method for delivering a plurality of different messages over a television transmission network, comprising:

creating a plurality of different media segments, wherein said different media segments include incomplete sections of a complete message, and wherein at least one subset of said media segments are a same length;

transmitting said plurality of different media segments to a television signal receiver, wherein all media segments in said at least one subset are transmitted simultaneously;

directing said television signal receiver to switch to one of said media segments in said subset as said media segments in said subset are received.

21. A method for delivering a plurality of different messages over a television transmission network, comprising:

creating a plurality of different media segments, wherein said different media segments include incomplete sections of a complete message, and wherein at least one subset of said media segments are a same length;

transmitting a plurality of television programs to a television signal receiver, wherein said plurality of television programs have at least one synchronized commercial break;

during said synchronized commercial break, transmitting said plurality of different media segments to said television signal receiver, wherein all media segments in said at least one subset are transmitted simultaneously;

directing said television signal receiver to switch to one of said media segments in said subset as said media segments in said subset are received; and

wherein after said synchronized commercial break, said television signal receiver switches to a previously selected television program.